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NSC FOR NEA STAFF

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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

- [1](#)1. U.S.-Israel Relations
- [1](#)2. Iran
- [1](#)3. Mideast

Key stories in the media:

The Jerusalem Post quoted President Obama as saying on IsraelQs 61st

birthday that the U.S. bond with Israel is Qas unshakable as ever as both nations pursue peace.

The Jerusalem Post reported that PM Benjamin Netanyahu plans to tell President Obama that Israel will accept "some form" of the Arab Peace Initiative. According to sources close to the policy review being undertaken by the new government, Israel will compromise on the Palestinian issue to obtain more direct and aggressive U.S. assistance on the Iranian front. It is not known if such help includes logistical support for Israeli strikes in the case of a military confrontation with Teheran. The newspaper reported that, while left-leaning politicians have expressed guarded optimism about the proposal, leaders of the Right have been skeptical about its sincerity. If Netanyahu indeed invokes the Arab Peace Initiative in his May 18 meeting with Obama in Washington, it would mark a major diplomatic concession for a Likud-Yisrael Beiteinu government. But a senior Israeli official familiar with the issue told the Post yesterday that such a move would be more form than substance, since Israel has been in agreement with "some parts" of the initiative for years.

HaQaretz and other media reported that President Shimon PeresQs office said that he will meet with President Obama on Monday, becoming the first Israeli official to meet with the new American president. Peres will be in Washington to deliver the keynote address at the annual AIPAC conference, which begins on Sunday. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton will also attend the two presidents' meeting. Peres met with PM Benjamin Netanyahu yesterday to discuss the message the Israeli government wants to relay to Washington. Opposition leader Tzipi Livni will also speak at the AIPAC conference, and is also likely to meet with Secretary Clinton. Israel Radio reported that Peres is expected to tell the U.S. administration that Israel wants to reach understandings with the U.S. in all domains.

Leading media quoted a Foreign Ministry official as saying that FM Avigdor Lieberman will make his first official trip abroad next week -Q to Rome, Paris, Berlin, and Prague. HaQaretz reported that yesterday, during a reception at the PresidentQs Residence, Lieberman congratulated Israel on its 61st anniversary, telling foreign diplomats that QIsrael has worked hard to achieve peace since the country was created. HaQaretz reported that a Foreign Ministry official has been warning European countries that unless they curtail criticism of Netanyahu's government, Israel will block the EU from participating in the diplomatic process with the Palestinians. The main target of the offensive is EU External Affairs Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner, who recently called for a freeze in upgrading ties with Israel over its peace process policies.

HaQaretz reported that Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer (Labor) told the daily that Netanyahu intends to conduct Qserious negotiations with the Palestinians and Syria.

The Jerusalem Post reported that, in the first case of its kind, a PA "military court" on Tuesday sentenced a Palestinian man to death by hanging after finding him guilty of selling land to Jews. The verdict came shortly after the PA's chief Islamic judge, Sheikh Tayseer Tamimi, issued yet another fatwa (religious decree) banning Muslims from selling land or houses to Jews. The death sentence is seen as an attempt by PA leadership in Ramallah to deter Palestinians from conducting real estate transactions with Jews. It follows reports that Jewish individuals and organizations recently bought land and houses from Arabs in Jerusalem and some areas in the West Bank. The man sentenced to death is Anwar Brigith, 59, from the village of Bet Umar, north of Hebron.

The Jerusalem Post reported that Ibrahim Khraishi, the PLO Ambassador to the UN in Geneva, told the newspaper last week that Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad did not win friends among the Palestinian delegation at the United Nation's anti-racism conference in Geneva last week, even though he championed their cause on its opening day. Khraishi was quoted as saying that his speech Qwas not helpful at all. It was not balanced.Q QHe [Ahmadinejad] made it a show and used it as an election campaign for his country, E Khraishi said. Although Ahmadinejad spoke of the QZionist crimes of aggression, carnage, and other brutalitiesQ against the civilians in

Gaza, the overall thrust of his speech, which called for the eradication of Zionism, did not fit with the goals and aims of the Palestinian delegation in Geneva. Khraishi pointed to Ahmadinejad's delegitimization of Israel's very existence and the Palestinians' acceptance of Israel with the pre-1967 borders. Khraishi was also quoted as saying that the Palestinians' weapon is international law, that Fatah will never accept Israel as a Jewish state, and that time is running out for both parties.

Maariv reported that Shas leader, Deputy PM, and Interior Minister Eli Yishai is proposing an Iraq-like outline, which would demand active American involvement until the Palestinians succeed in stabilizing an independent national entity alongside Israel.

The Jerusalem Post reported that yesterday U.S. National Security Council spokesman Mike Hammer told foreign journalists that the White House rejects the notion of putting timelines on its engagement with Iran, indicating that its efforts could take a significant amount of time.

The Jerusalem Post reported that the German Near and Middle East Association (NUMOV), an NGO whose honorary chairman is former German chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, is promoting billions of Euros of trade between German companies and Iran. NUMOV's Web site displays an invitation to next week's fifth annual German-Middle East Round Table: FOCUS IRAN.

The Jerusalem Post reported that on April 23 in Jerusalem Ambassador Cunningham participated in ANZAC Day's commemoration of the disastrous landing at Gallipoli by Australian and New Zealand soldiers who fought in World War I.

Haaretz reported that the Geneva Initiative Campaign's activities are focusing on convincing Shas Party activists and the Russian immigrant community to support an Israeli-Palestinian agreement.

The Jerusalem Post noted that there were several American-born soldiers among the 120 outstanding ones honored on Independence Day yesterday.

Jeremy Ben-Ami, Executive Director of the liberal Jewish lobby J Street, was quoted as saying in an interview with The Jerusalem Post that the Zionist dream will not be fully realized until the Palestinians have a state.

Haaretz reported that yesterday, as part of the Nakba Day events, hundreds of Israeli Arabs visited the sites of Palestinian villages that had been demolished during the War of Independence. The day marks the defeat of the Palestinian Arab community in the war.

Citing the AP, The Jerusalem Post reported that Turkey's military chief Ilker Basbug told reporters yesterday that he was not concerned by Israel's reaction to the Syrian-Turkish maneuvers, and that Turkey was not seeking any other country's comment.

All media reported that the dispute between Bank of Israel Governor Stanley Fischer and Shari Arison, one of the richest Israelis, is getting worse. The bank said that the appointment process of the CEO of Bank Hapoalim, the largest Israeli bank, in which Arison holds an important stake, is faulty.

Yediot reported that between May 7 and 9, Arad, the hometown of famed Israeli novelist Amos Oz, will hold a festive cultural event in honor of his 70th birthday.

The media reported that two cases of swine flu have been confirmed in Israel. Neither of the patients was seriously ill.

1. U.S.-Israel Relations:

Summary:

Diplomatic correspondent Aluf Benn wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: QThe ideological affinity and close coordination that Israel enjoyed under Bush left the White House along with the former president. Netanyahu will have to work in order to restore the intimacy and closeness to U.S.-Israel ties.

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: QCandidate Obama chose his words carefully when he declared that QIsrael's security is sacrosanctQ.... Those who would try to talk Obama out of this solemn pledge are no friends of Israel -- no way, no shape, no how.

Block Quotes:

I. "Netanyahu Has His Work Cut Out"

Diplomatic correspondent Aluf Benn wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (4/30): Q[In his approach to the Middle East,] Obama has called for a radical change in direction from his predecessor's policies, but at the same time has given relatively low priority to dealing with Israel and its neighbors.... Israel has enjoyed a Qwaiting periodQ in its relationship with Obama, but this period will end when Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visits Washington on May 18. Obama and other senior administration officials have made it clear to Netanyahu that he should not waste their time by turning the visit into a public relations campaign; rather, he must propose practical steps for furthering the diplomatic process and improving the lot of the Palestinians. Netanyahu wants to place Iran at the top of the agenda, but U.S. officials will explain that Israel will have to give something in return. The ideological affinity and close coordination that Israel enjoyed under Bush left the White House along with the former president. Netanyahu will have to work in order to restore the intimacy and closeness to U.S.-Israel ties.

II. "Two New Leaders"

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (4/30): QAs Israelis celebrated Yom Ha'atzmaut [Independence Day] yesterday, President Barack Obama completed the first 100 days of his presidency -- with some pundits and lobbyists baying for him to Qstand up to IsraelQ by imposing an American diktat to QsolveQ the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.... Candidate Obama chose his words carefully when he declared that QIsrael's security is sacrosanct, and that Qthe United States must be a strong and consistent partner -- not to force concessions, but to help committed partners avoid stalemate.Q Those who would try to talk Obama out of this solemn pledge are no friends of Israel -- no way, no shape, no how.

2. Iran: -----

Summary:

Columnist Ari Shavit wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz, in a Qpolitical fictionQ piece set in a prospective 2012: QHad [Barack Obama] known at the beginning of his term what he knows now, he would have made a different strategic decision about Iran's nuclear program.

Block Quotes:

"Obama 2012"

Columnist Ari Shavit wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz, in a Qpolitical fictionQ piece set in a prospective 2012 (4/30): QThe first signs that something was wrong had already appeared at the end of that first year of grace. Nevertheless, Washington was astounded when, in the summer of 2010, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad announced that he was expelling international inspectors and galloping full-tilt toward the

production of nuclear weapons. The shock turned to horror on the eve of Christmas 2010, when Iran's spiritual leader, Ali Khamenei, stated that his country had its first three nuclear warheads -- aimed at Riyadh, Cairo, and Tel Aviv.... What went wrong? Where did Obama go astray? In retrospect, the answer is clear and simple. In the summer of 2009, the President had to make the most courageous decision of his life: to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons.... Ironically ... only such a decision could have saved his legacy and advanced the noble values he believed in. Only that decision could have led to a comprehensive peace in the Middle East.... Had he known at the beginning of his term what he knows now, he would have made a different strategic decision about Iran's nuclear program.

13. Mideast:

Summary:

Columnist and former intelligence officer Amos Gilboa wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv: QIf Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu promotes a new political-security program of his own in the near future, its vision has to be clear: a Palestinian state for the Palestinian people and a Jewish state for the Jewish people.

Block Quotes:

"No Movement without Recognition"

Columnist and former intelligence officer Amos Gilboa wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv (4/30): QFor [the Palestinians], the State of Israel is a creation that lacks any national identity, a product of colonialism, a vicious and aggressive entity. The ludicrous Palestinian excuse is that there is no Jewish nationality and only a Jewish religion, and that members of other religions live in Israel, and not only Jews. That is ludicrous because the Palestinians define themselves as both by means of their nationality and their religion.... What is sad is that there are some Israelis who claim that we do not need Palestinian and Arab recognition of the Jewish state. It is enough, they say, that we define Israel as the Jewish state and that the world knows that. In other words, we don't care what or how the people in our surroundings view us. That is a mistake because it means that the demand to have the refugees return will not end; it means that the Arabs of Israel will always be able to oppose the Jewish state and to act accordingly; it means that the Arab surroundings will always view us as a temporary factor; it means that Israelis will also be helping Ahmadinejad (and his many supporters in the West) promote his goal of dismantling, in the best-case-scenario, Israel as the state of the Jewish people. If Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu promotes a new political-security program of his own in the near future, its vision has to be clear: a Palestinian state for the Palestinian people and a Jewish state for the Jewish people.

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